

## **SEDIMENT TMDL DEVELOPMENT IN ELK RIVER**

The North Coast Regional Water Quality Control Board (Regional Water Board) and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) have listed the Elk River watershed under the Clean Water Act Section 303(d) as a sediment impaired waterbody. A program has been developed to recover 303(d) List waterbodies via the establishment of Total Maximum Daily Loads (TMDL). At this time, the Regional Water Board is beginning the process of establishing a TMDL for sediment in the Elk River watershed. The goal of the TMDL program is to restore and maintain the sediment impaired beneficial uses of water of Elk River and its tributaries.

This is the first in a series of newsletters to keep you informed about the Elk River TMDL process.

### **WHAT IS A TMDL?**

A TMDL – or **T**otal **M**aximum **D**aily **L**oad – is a calculation of the maximum amount of a pollutant (or load) that a waterbody can receive and still meet protective water quality standards. A sediment TMDL is the sum of the allowable loads of sediment from all contributing natural and land management inputs, with consideration for seasonal variations. The TMDL process will also identify the sediment reductions necessary to meet water quality standards, and will prioritize and allocate restoration and reduction among the sources in the watershed. Finally, an implementation plan will be developed to achieve the reductions within a reasonable timeframe.

## **SEDIMENT IMPAIRMENT IN ELK RIVER**

Watershed stakeholders and state agency evaluations of Elk River have demonstrated severe sediment impairments due to cumulative watershed effects. Among these impairments are degradation or elimination of domestic and agricultural water supplies, destruction of fisheries habitat, degradation of recreation values, and instream sediment accumulation contributing to increased flood frequency and severity. The Regional Water Board has required watershed evaluations and monitoring of activities which have the potential to discharge sediment to the Elk River and its tributaries.

The TMDL development was originally scheduled for completion by 2010. However, considering the current sediment impairment of beneficial uses of water, and direction provided by the State Water Resources Control Board, implementation has been revised. According to the expedited schedule, a draft TMDL and implementation plan will be available for public comment in May 2003 and will be reviewed for adoption by the Regional Board in August 2003.

The focus of the sediment TMDL in Elk River will be to restore and maintain the beneficial uses of water impaired by sediment, which include water supplies, fisheries habitat, recreation, and others.

Further information on TMDLs can be found on the Regional Water Board's web site at:  
<http://www.swrcb.ca.gov/rwqcb1/ProgramInformation/tmdl/tmdlprogram.html>

and on the EPA web page at:  
<http://www.epa.gov/region09/water/tmdl>

## **OPPORTUNITY TO PARTICIPATE IN THE ELK RIVER TMDL PROCESS**

The Regional Water Board has the challenging task of estimating how much sediment is being delivered to the streams, how much reduction is required to support beneficial uses, and how to achieve those reductions. This task can best be accomplished with your assistance, as knowledgeable residents and stakeholders in the watershed. This task, while technically difficult, offers an exceptional opportunity for interested parties to share their knowledge, experience, and creative ideas on the development and implementation of this TMDL through public participation.

We invite all watershed stakeholders to share ideas on the development and implementation of this TMDL through participation in public meetings; participation in watershed questionnaires and interviews; review and comment on work products; and the submittal of relevant data and information, data interpretation, and watershed analyses.

Regional Water Board staff recognize and appreciate that there is a wealth of information regarding the Elk River watershed. We encourage involvement in this watershed effort designed to improve and recover the water quality and stream conditions in the Elk River watershed.

## WATERSHED INFORMATION

In the TMDL process, the Regional Water Board staff will be using watershed data such as the following:

- Rainfall, stream flow, and flooding history
- Indicators of stream channel sediment transport capacity
- Instream sediment composition
- Location of landslides, gullies and other sources of sediment to streams
- Assessment of road networks, including road types, densities, and construction dates
- Sediment production rates for both human-related and natural sources of sediment
- Volume and location of instream stored sediment
- Discharge rates of suspended and bedload sediment to watercourses
- Cold water fisheries habitat and distribution
- Fish population composition and distribution
- Locations and causes of instream barriers to fish passage
- Location and nature of historic and current domestic and agriculture water supply intakes
- Volume and location of large woody debris
- Accounts of historical watershed conditions

The Regional Water Board staff will also be collecting additional information to fill in important data gaps identified during development of the TMDL.

## SEDIMENT, WATER QUALITY, AND TMDLs



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### ELK RIVER SEDIMENT TMDL PUBLIC MEETING

The first in a series of public scoping meetings will be held **May 28, 2002, 7-9 PM, at the Agricultural Extension Service Building, 5630 S. Broadway in Eureka.**

We encourage all stakeholders to attend this public meeting and meet staff of the Regional Water Board working on development of the Elk River sediment TMDL. This meeting is an opportunity to learn more about the TMDL process in your watershed, ask questions, and share your knowledge and experience of the Elk River watershed.

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### CONTACT INFORMATION

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